



## TECW Celebrates Women's History Month

The theme for the 2012 Women's History Month celebration is **"Women's Education—Women's Empowerment."** Although women now outnumber men in American colleges nationwide, the reversal of the gender gap is a very recent phenomenon. The equal opportunity to learn, taken for granted by most young women today, owes much to Title IX which transformed the educational landscape of America in the span of a generation.

2012 National Women's History Project honorees are women pioneers in the diverse field of education:

Women's Higher Education Pioneer Emma Hart Willard, Freedman Bureau Educator Charlotte Forten Grimke, Disability Education Architect Annie Sullivan, Feminist Educational Reformer Gracia Molina de Pick, Community Development Activist Okolo Rashid and American Indian Advocate and Educator Brenda Flyswithawks.

See page two for some of the many events throughout Tennessee this month celebrating our women pioneers and leaders. Here are some other suggestions for ways to celebrate the women in your community:

♦ **Ask** your child's teacher what is planned for Women's History Month

♦ **Suggest** that your local newspaper, radio and TV programs honor teachers

♦ **Plan** a reception, lunch or event honoring women in your community who are pioneering role models

♦ **Host** a movie like *Erin Brockovich*, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* or *A League of Their Own* celebrating courageous women

♦ **Mentor** a young woman in your community or profession

## This Issue...

Women's History Month	1
In the Spotlight:	
Alma Sanford	1
MTSU Luncheon	2
Across Tennessee	2
Director's Column	3
Chinese Youth Entrepreneurs	3



## Woman in the Spotlight: Alma Sanford, Activist and Advocate

Since her youth Alma Sanford has been a woman of action. As a child participating in 4-H club while working on her family's farm in West Kentucky and her grandfather's farm in Tennessee, Alma was taught to "let your life be your sermon about your faith in serving God."

Alma has passionately served each of the communities in which she has lived. She has done pro-bono work for the elderly, inspired young women considering legal professions and given a hand up to many women in business and professions through her in-



volvement on boards and professional organizations. Alma has been recognized with the National Humanitarian Award from the National Federation of Democratic Women.

Alma has volunteered her time as a legislative advocate and political campaigner. She has managed or volunteered on the campaigns of many women, including Kathleen Sebelius and Hillary Clinton. Alma has been an advocate for voting integrity in Tennessee and a strong supporter of working people. In 2005 she was presented the Tennessee AFL-CIO President's Award. In

2008 Alma was elected as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Currently Alma serves on the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus as the Vice President for Planning. She is also on the board of the Women's Economic Council Foundation.

Alma has worked as a fundraiser as well, serving four years on the Board of the Center for Health Services (CHS) of the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Alma works to celebrate the achievements of others. She worked on the planning committee of the Nashville

NAACP's dinner to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and is currently working on an initiative to raise approximately a half million dollars to erect a monument on the Tennessee State Capitol grounds to commemorate the work of Tennessee suffragists.

Alma Sanford is a passionate advocate for her community and especially for women. As one who believes we should "pay forward" the help received from mentors, she never pulls the ladder up behind her.

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## MTSU Honors ‘Unsung Heroes’ at Feb 7th Unity Luncheon

Since 1996, MTSU has held its Unity Luncheon during Black History Month to honor the “unsung heroes” of middle Tennessee’s African-American community.

The 2012 celebration, conducted Feb. 7, in the University’s James Union building, sang the praises of a trio of honorable women: Olivia Murray Woods, Thenartis Ellis and Mary C. Scales.

Woods was the first African-American to enroll at MTSU as an undergraduate student. She earned her Bachelor of Science in elementary education in 1965 and a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction

in 1974, teaching second and third grade in the Murfreesboro City Schools until her retirement in 1986.

Ellis was the first African-American hired in a departmental office at MTSU. She worked as a secretary in the Department of Economics and Finance for 36 years until her retirement.

Scales, MTSU’s first African-American professor, is known for her decades of teaching and civic work, including her longtime membership on the Murfreesboro City School Board and her election as the first black woman on the Murfreesboro City Council.



**HONOREES:** Four history-making women pose before the Feb. 7th Unity Luncheon on the campus of MTSU. From left are Council Director and Event Keynote Speaker Phyllis Qualls-Brooks with Event Honorees Olivia M. Woods, Thenartis Ellis and Mary Scales (MTSU photo by J. Intintoli).

## Across Tennessee

### Women’s History Month

**March 15: Tennessee State University:** Women of Legend & Merit Awards

**March 15: Vanderbilt University:** Celebration of Women

**March 22: Tennessee Tech:** Presentation on Tennessee women by Beverly Bond, Professor of African-American History, University of Memphis

**March 22: MTSU:** Women’s History Month Keynote Address by Marlee Matlin

**March 25: Memphis:** Women of Achievement Awards Celebration

**March 29: Tennessee Tech:** Human Trafficking and Sex Trade by Norma Ramos, Executive Director, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

**March 30: Vanderbilt University:** “Fly, Girl!” Dramatization of the life of Bessie Coleman, the first African American female aviator

**March 31: National Coalition of 100 Black Women:** Sister for Sister Conference



**Coming to Nashville**  
**Fall 2012**

**Check Out Our Website For:**

- Upcoming Events
- Current Council Reports

**[www.tennesseeewomen.org](http://www.tennesseeewomen.org)**

**Follow us on Facebook:**

**[www.facebook.com/TNECW](http://www.facebook.com/TNECW)**

**& on Twitter:**

**@TECW**

## TECW Commemorates April 17th: National Equal Pay Day

Equal Pay Day is April 17, 2012. This day symbolizes how far into 2012 United States women must work to earn what men earned in 2011. Median earnings are \$31,585 for women and \$41,019 for men in the state.

Whether the wage gap and occupational segregation of women is due to discrimination by employers or due to socialization that affects women's choices, or both, there is a pressing need to address it in a multi-faceted way with involvement from all of the stakeholders.

Wage inequality impacts the percent of women in

poverty. In Tennessee in 2009, 8.3 percent of employed women over 16 years were in poverty and 6.1 percent of employed men were in poverty.

Women's economic well-being is crucial to the well-being of families and of the entire economy. Women make around 80 percent of purchasing decisions in the United States.

Encourage women and girls to pursue higher-wage occupations, work for family-friendly policies in your work-place, and support wage equity legislation and employer self-policing.

### What Steps Can You Take Toward the Achievement of Equal Pay?

#### Employers

- ◆ **Examine your pay and advancement practices** to ensure that they treat all employees equally
- ◆ In a competitive economy **fair pay policies attract the best job candidates** and make for a highly-motivated workforce

#### Individuals

- ◆ **Contact your elected representatives** to tell them how important fair pay is to you
- ◆ **Advocate family-friendly policies** in your workplace, including safe, affordable childcare
- ◆ **Form a wage equity group** for conversation about wage equality and for support to obtain the tools they need to ensure their own fair access to pay



## Tennessee - China: Future Entrepreneur Leadership Program

On Feb 2, Governor Haslam welcomed the Future Entrepreneurs Leadership Group from Beijing to the State Capitol. Shannon White (TECW) was a co-host on the Capitol Tour with Li and Bryan Weaver (JC Business Group). The group of 22 high school students was accompanied by the producer of the largest network in China CCTV. Students had the opportunity to utilize their entrepreneurship training by "marketing" some the crafts they had created. At the end of the tour, the students presented the Governor with traditional calligraphy wishing him well in the year of the dragon. (Photos Provided by the State of Tennessee)





## A Message from Executive Director Phyllis Qualls-Brooks...



**Phyllis Qualls-Brooks, Director  
of the Tennessee Economic  
Council on Women**

It is a special honor for me to present my first message as Executive Director of the Tennessee Economic Council on Women in March, recognized nationally as Women's History Month. Since I joined the Council in January, I have had the opportunity to meet many of the members either in person or by phone; others I hope to meet very soon. In just a few months, I have represented the Council at many events and before various audiences, ranging from legislative committees to community civic and social organizations, as well as

sessions with top level officials from state government and private corporations. We also have released our current Directory of Council Members and distributed updates on the activities of Council members. It has been a pleasure spreading the word about the Council and its significant work.

February and March give us cause to really celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of women. In February and March the nation celebrates Black History and Women's History months, respectively. This is a time to really highlight the accomplishments of both groups.

In March, as stated by the MTSU June Anderson Center for Women and Nontraditional Students, "The nation recognizes, promotes, and celebrates women's contributions and causes by providing education and entertainment from a feminist perspective that emphasizes cultural transformation

to achieve social justice and women's empowerment."

In this issue, we focus on Women's History Month and shine a special spotlight on one of our own, Alma Sanford, who is also nominated for the Nashville Athena Award this year. We certainly hope she wins, however to the Council, she is already a winner.

On our Facebook page, we spotlight First Lady Crissy Haslam and the female commissioners of Governor Haslam's administration, who share their special quotes and what those quotes mean to them.

In April we recognize National Equal Pay Day and focus much attention on the issue of women's salaries in comparison to men's. Currently in Tennessee women make 77 cents to a man's dollar.

Through research, advocacy, meetings and summits, the Council meets the significant need of informing our various publics, so that

women can achieve economic autonomy. We partner with many organizations and events to promote the Council and discuss issues dealing with women, children and families.

The more informed people are, the better decisions they can make for a wholesome quality of life. I look forward to doing the work of the Council to promote women by conducting research on economic issues, holding hearings and meetings, as well as the annual summit, to provide information and publicize issues concerning women.

Together we can continue to do great things through awareness, advocacy and action. Thank you for this opportunity.

Phyllis Qualls-Brooks,  
Ed.D.

## March 8th—International Women's Day 2012

*Empowering Rural Women to End Hunger and Poverty*

For more than 100 years this day has celebrated the achievements of women and spread awareness of remaining challenges. This year's focus is on education as the cure for hunger and poverty among rural women.

According to UNESCO, "Rural households headed by women are among the most vulnerable of the world's 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty in developing countries. Women and girls constitute 60 percent of people suffering from chronic hunger worldwide."

For more information, visit [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org).

## Council Elects 2012 Officers:

**Yvonne Wood, Chair**

**Elliott Moore, Vice-Chair**

**Dena Wise, East Tennessee Representative**

**Tommie Morton-Young, Middle Tennessee Representative**

**Ellen Vergos, West Tennessee Representative**

**Sandra Bennett, Secretary**

**Jane Powers, Treasurer**

**Carol Danehower, Immediate Past Chair**